



CY-ICER 2012

The research preferences and occupational commitment of academic staff

Ismail Bakan^{a*}, Burcu Ersahan^b, Tuba Buyukbese^c, Ilker Kefe^d^a*Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University, Kahramanmaras, 46100*^b*Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University, Kahramanmaras, 46100*^c*Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University, Kahramanmaras, 46100*^d*Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University, Kahramanmaras, 46100*

Abstract

The aim of this research is to reveal the research preferences of academic staff and to investigate the relationship between occupational commitment and research preferences in academicians. The sample comprises 130 academicians from Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University in Turkey. Reunamo's (2007) general model of agentive perception was used to design research preferences scale. Research preferences comprises four components namely; qualitative, quantitative, theoretic and participative. Occupational commitment measured by Mowday and Steers' organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ). The five-point Likert scale varying from strongly disagree to strongly agree was offered for the respondents. The SPSS Programme will be used for the analysis of the research data, obtained via questionnaires. The results and recommendations in the paper will be of interest to those involved in the field of research and education.

© 2012 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Selection and/or peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Uzunboylu

Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Keywords: Resesarch preferences, occupational commitment

1. Introduction

In today's changing global economy occupational commitment is considered to be an important source of identification and continuity in organizations. Doing research is one of the main parts of the job for academicians. In this paper the relationship between the occupational commitment of academic staff and their research preferences are investigated. For this purpose, firstly occupational commitment and research subjects are explained. Then in order to state the relationship between the occupational commitment and the research preferences, the study is supported with an empirical study conducted in Kahramanmaras in Turkey.

2. Occupational commitment

In 1977, Steers stated that the concept of employee commitment to organizations had received increased attention in the research literature recently as both managers and organizational analysts seek ways to increase employee retention and performance. Today, most of employees have a dynamic and multidirectional career path and more occupational opportunities than did their predecessors in earlier generations. Commitment is more

* Ismail Bakan, Tel.: +90-344-219-1043

E-mail address: ibakan63@hotmail.com

important for managers and organizations than ever. Whereas organizational commitment refers to attachment to a particular group or organization (Classen and Chiu, 2011), Lee and friends (2000) defined occupational commitment as the employee's affective attachment to his or her occupation and as a person's belief in and acceptance of the values of one's occupation or line of work, and a willingness to maintain membership in that occupation (Vandenberg and Scapello, 1994; Heijden, Dam and Hasselhorn, 2009). Researchers have found relationship between occupational commitment and work-related behaviors such as absenteeism, turnover, job satisfaction, performance, and leader-subordinate relations (Hassan and Hashim, 2011; Blau and Holladay, 2006; Irving et al., 1997; Meyer et al., 1993).

3. Research Preferences of Academic Personnel

Research is the orderly investigation of a subject matter for the aim of adding to knowledge and typically means investigating a new problem or phenomenon (Postlethwaite, 2005:50). According to the kinds of information that they provide, their topic and phenomena being investigated research studies may be classified in different ways. Some examples of research topics are historical research, descriptive research, correlational research, causal research, experimental research, case study research, ethnographic research, research and development research. (Postlethwaite, 2005:51). A more widely applied way of classifying research studies classified as follows:

- **Theoretical research** is the maximum value that research can assume using definitions, (Erickson and Siau, 2007: 5). In terms of the research rationale, a theoretical review can help establish a lack of theories or reveal that the current theories are insufficient, helping to justify that a new theory should be developed. (Randolph, 2009:4-5).
- **Participative research** usually consists of a description of events that occur within the life of a group – with particular reference to the interaction of individuals in the context of the sociocultural norms, rituals, and beliefs shared by the group. The researchers generally participate in some part of the normal life of the group and uses what they learn from this participation to understand the interactions between group members (Postlethwaite, 2005:50-58).
- **Quantitative research** is the research that concentrates primarily on the collection of quantitative data. (Johnson and Christensen, 2007:664). In quantitative research the observations typically follow a systematic scheme where the classification of the observations is already determined to a large extent when the data collection begins. This makes it possible to collect large data sets for numerical analyses, but the understanding of the findings will be restricted by the concepts on which the collection of data was based. (Stenius et al., 2008:1).
- **Qualitative research** is the research that concentrates on the collection of qualitative data. (Johnson and Christensen, 2007:664). A qualitative approach to the field of investigation means that researchers analyze things in their natural settings, initiating to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The immediate and local meanings of actions, as defined from the actor's point of view, are thus very important (Erickson, 1986). This understanding of qualitative research shifts our attention to the concept of voice. Qualitative research approaches, such as case studies, biographies, phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, and ethnographic studies, are described in detail (Moen, 2006:6).
- **Mixed research** is the research that the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad aims of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (Johnson et al., 2007:124).

After a period in the paradigmatic wilderness, mixed methods research has regained not just acceptability, but popularity, with a significant number of studies arguing its virtues in terms of greater understanding and/or validation of results (Bazeley, 2002:1).

In this study we used Reunamo and Pipere's (2010) research classification as described four sectors that have different orientations of research practice and relationships between the ideas and events:

- (1) **Qualitative Research** is adaptive and accommodative and the researcher is interested in the phenomenon as an experience of something real and seeks to adapt to it;
- (2) **Quantitative Research** is adaptive and assimilative and the researcher applies predefined assumptions to an existing environment;
- (3) **Theoretic Research** is agentive and assimilative and a theory is built or applied to describe the dynamics of the phenomena in order to find ideas that contribute to environmental change; and
- (4) **Participative Research** is agentive and accommodative and seen as a possible vehicle for environmental change.

4. Aim of the Study

The purpose of this research was to reveal research preferences of academic personnel and investigate the relationship between academic personnel's research preferences and occupational commitment. For these purposes the following hypothesis were advanced:

H1: There is a significant difference in occupational commitment level with reference to using theoretic, participative and mixed 1 methods.

H2: There is a significant difference in occupational commitment level with reference to using quantitative, qualitative and mixed 2 methods.

4.1. Variable measurement

A three section questionnaire is used to collect the data. The first section asks the respondents about their demographic data. In the second section, the respondents are requested to indicate their own research preferences. The third section questions the occupational commitment of the respondents. The 32-item research preferences were adopted from Reunamo's (2007) general model of agentive perception and Reunamo and Pipere's (2010) Research for Education for Sustainable Development questionnaire. Research preferences are divided into four groups named; quantitative, qualitative, theoretic and participative research orientations. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, a 15-item scale from Mowday and Steers (1979) were adopted and used to collect data on academic staff of Kahramanmaraş Sutcu Imam University in Turkey. Each item was measured using a 5-point Likert scale in which 5 indicated "strongly agree" and 1 indicated "strongly disagree."

4.2. Analysis

The methods of data analysis used in this study consisted of mean and standard deviation data, internal consistency reliability, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. Table 1 shows the results of reliability analyses.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

| | N | \bar{x} | Std. Dev. | Cronbach Alfa |
|-------------------------|-----|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Theoretic | 130 | 3,7385 | 0,67701 | 0,813 |
| Participative | 130 | 3,8821 | 0,64396 | 0,772 |
| Quantitative | 130 | 3,8066 | 0,73185 | 0,844 |
| Qualitative | 130 | 3,1110 | 0,79275 | 0,780 |
| Occupational commitment | 130 | 3,8923 | 0,69172 | 0,931 |

A total of 130 usable questionnaires were obtained which is about 37,75 percent rate of return. Descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, and frequencies were requested. All Cronbach's Alpha values are more than 0.7. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to investigate the different impact of research preferences on the occupational commitment of the academicians.

When asked to specify respondents' demographic characteristics, 69,6 percent of them were male and 30,4 percent were female. It was found that 60 percent of the respondents were married, while 40 percent single. There were two main specialization groups of respondents in which 47,3 percent were studying science, and 52,7 percent

of them were studying social studies. Data also shows that about 52 percent of respondents had been working as an academicians in this university for 5 years or less and 48 percent of respondents had their experience as an academicians for more than 5 years. Based on the respondents' educational attainment level, the majority, 56,2 percent of lecturers hold a PhD degree, about 36,9 percent had obtained master degree. The demographic data also indicate that 9,2 percent of the respondents were Professor, 11,5 percent Associate Professor, 25,4 percent Assistant Professor, 37,7 percent Research Assistant, and the remaining 16,1 percent were Instructor or Specialist. 18,3 percent of the research participants had administrative position.

Table 2. Participants' Demographic Characteristics

| | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | | | Age | | |
| Female | 38 | 30,4 | Less than 26 | 19 | 15,0 |
| Male | 87 | 69,6 | 26-30 | 32 | 25,2 |
| | | | 31-45 | 28 | 22,1 |
| Marital Status | | | | | |
| Married | 78 | 60,0 | 46-50 | 27 | 21,3 |
| Single | 52 | 40,0 | More than 50 | 13 | 16,5 |
| Educational Qualification | | | Tenure | | |
| Undergraduate | 9 | 6,9 | 0-5 Years | 66 | 52,0 |
| Masters | 48 | 36,9 | 6-10 Years | 15 | 11,8 |
| Doctorate | 73 | 56,2 | 11-15 Years | 13 | 10,2 |
| | | | More than 15 | 33 | 26,0 |
| Academic Title | | | Area of Specialization | | |
| Prof. | 12 | 9,2 | Science | 61 | 47,3 |
| Asc. Prof. | 15 | 11,5 | Social studies | 68 | 52,7 |
| Ass. Prof. | 33 | 25,4 | | | |
| Instructor | 12 | 9,2 | Administrative Position | | |
| Res. Ass. | 49 | 37,7 | Yes | 23 | 18,3 |
| Specialist | 9 | 6,9 | No | 103 | 81,7 |

Table 3.
The
Relationship
Between
n

Research Preferences and Occupational Commitment

| | N | \bar{x} | Std. Dev. | F | Sig. |
|----------------------|----|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Theoretic | 24 | 3,8287 | 0,93817 | | |
| Participative | 38 | 3,6736 | 0,69336 | 3,629 | 0,029 |
| Mixed 1 | 68 | 4,0369 | 0,55120 | | |
| Qualitative | 80 | 3,9319 | 0,59731 | | |
| Quantitative | 22 | 4,0010 | 0,69760 | 1,570 | 0,212 |
| Mixed 2 | 28 | 3,6937 | 0,89917 | | |

When the respondents were questioned about their research preferences; significant difference among participants seems to be theoretic and participative methods. Researchers who used mixed 1 method valued both theoretic and participative methods. And researchers who used mixed 2 method valued both quantitative and qualitative methods. The data concerning the research methods show that 18,5 percent respondents were using theoretic methods, 29,2 percent participative methods, 52,3 percent mixed methods. Thus, we can affirm that 70,7 percent of the researchers were using theoretic methods, and 81,5 percent participative methods. Qualitative method was used by the 61,5 percent of the respondents, and quantitative method was used by the 17 percent of them. 21,5 percent of the respondents were using both qualitative and quantitative method (mixed 2).

The first hypothesis, related using theoretic, participative and mixed 1 methods on occupational commitment behaviour, was strongly supported; it was significant at $p < 0.005$ level. There was a statistically significance

difference between the respondents who use theoretic research method, participative research method, or use both methods (mixed1). Table 3 shows that respondents using both theoretic and participative research method were, more committed to their occupation than the respondents using other research methods. The findings, however, did not support second hypothesis as no significant difference was obtained between the occupational commitment of respondents using quantitative, qualitative or mixed 2 methods.

5. Conclusion

Occupational commitment has an important place in the study of organizational behavior. The importance of occupational commitment is explained by following reasons: (a) people's jobs are major focus' of their lives, (b) the possible link to keeping one's job or relationship with the organization, (c) possible relationships to work performance, and (d) "the understanding of how people develop, make sense of, and integrate their work related commitments" (Lee, Carswell, and Allen, 2000). There are numerous studies about commitment, its antecedents and outcomes. However this is the only study showing the relationship between research preferences and occupational commitment. Academic staff whose one of the most important mission is doing research, uses different research methods in their studies. This study empirically examines the difference between academic staff's research preferences and its effect on their occupational commitment. For this purpose 130 questionnaires were collected from the academic staff in Sutcu Imam University, Turkey. Frequency test was applied according to the demographics of academicians (Gender, Marital status, Educational qualification, Academic title, Age, Tenure, Area of specialization, Administrative position). ANOVA test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between occupational commitment and research preferences. There is a significant difference between using theoretic, participative or mixed 1 methods and occupational commitment behavior, however there is no significant difference between using qualitative, quantitative or mixed 2 methods and occupational commitment behavior. The limitation of study is that the data were gathered in only one organization. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalized. The findings remain tentative until this study has been confirmed by other studies.

References

- Bazeley, P. (2002). Issues in mixed methods research. *First International Conference in Qualitative Research in Marketing and Management*, University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna, 8-14th, April.
- Beatrice, I. J. M. van der Heijden, Van Dam K., & Hasselhorn, H. M. (2009). Intention to leave nursing: The importance of interpersonal work context, work-home interference, and job satisfaction beyond the effect of occupational commitment, *Career Development International*, 14 (7), 616-635.
- Blau, G., & Holladay, E. B. (2006). Testing the discriminant validity of a four-dimensional occupational commitment measure, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 79, (4), 691-704.
- Erickson, J. & Siau, K. (2007). Theoretical and practical complexity of modeling methods, *Communications Of The Acm*, 50 (8), 46-51.
- Harman, G. (2004). *Practical aspects of theoretical reasoning*, The Oxford Handbook of Rationality, Edited by Al Mele and Piers Rawling (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 45-56.
- Hassan, A., & Junaidah H. (2011). Role of organizational justice in determining work outcomes of national and expatriate academic staff in Malaysia, *International Journal of Commerce and Management*, 21 (1), 82-93.
- Irving, G. P., Coleman, D. F., & Cooper, C. L. (1997). Further assessments of a three-component model of occupational commitment: generalizability and differences across occupations, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82 (3), 444-52.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, A. L. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research, *Journal Of Mixed Methods Research*, 1 (2), 112-133.
- Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2007). *Educational Research, Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Research*, University of South Alabama , (pp.664), Sage Publications, 3rd. Edition.

- Klassen, R. M., & Chiu, M. M. (2011). The occupational commitment and intention to quit of practicing and pre-service teachers: Influence of self-efficacy, job stress, and teaching context, *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36, 114–129.
- Lee, K., Carswell, J. J., & Allen, N. J. (2000). A meta-analytic review of occupational commitment: Relations with person- and work-related variables, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85 (5), 799-811.
- Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: extension and test of a three-component conceptualization, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78 (4), 538-51.
- Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the narrative research approach, *International Journal Of Qualitative Methods*, 5 (4), 1-11.
- Postlethwaite, T. N. (2005). Educational research: some basic concepts and terminology, quantitative research methods in educational planning, *Unesco International Institute For Educational Planning*.
- Randolph, J. J. (2009). A guide to writing the dissertation literature review, *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 14 (13), 1-13.
- Steers, R. M. (1997). Antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22 (1), 46-56.
- Stenius, K., Mäkelä, K., Miovsky M., & Gabrhelik, R. (2008). *How To Write Publishable Qualitative Research*, Addiction Science: A Guide For The Perplexed, Second Edition.
- Valero, C. A. (1997). Applications of qualitative and quantitative techniques of management in administrative/academic decision-making in institutions of higher education in Virginia, *Dissertation Submitted To The Faculty Of The Virginia Polytechnic Institute And State University The Degree Of Doctor Of Education In Educational Administration*.
- Vandenberg, R. J., & Scapello, V. (1994). A longitudinal assessment of the determinant relationship between employee commitments to the occupation and the organization, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15, 535-47.